



Politics of Urban Planning and Inclusive Development in Tanzania

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Abstract

Urban planning and inclusive development have become important issues to the fast urbanization and socioeconomic change of Tanzania. The politics of city governance, the spatial planning and fair allocation of services has remained to impact on the way cities develop and operate. The paper provides an analysis of the impact of the governance structure, politicking interests, and policy implementation on the outcomes of urban development in major cities in Tanzania, namely, Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Arusha, and Mwanza. It relies on theories of institutional and governance and examines their overlapping to ensure inclusiveness or not through decentralization, political accountability, and participatory planning frameworks. Based on evidence through government reports, academic research and reviews of urban policies, the paper indicates that gaps between policy design and policy implementation occur continuously with political interference, institutional failures and low citizen participation. Although there are progressive policies of urban development like the National Urban Development Policy (2012) and the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, they have not been implemented due to the lack of proper resources and effective coordination between the central and local governments. The paper concludes that to attain inclusive urban development in Tanzania, the government should strengthen transparency in governance, increase the autonomy of local governments and promote the multi-stakeholder participation in the urban planning processes.

Keywords: urban governance, inclusive development, policy implementation, Tanzania, urban planning, decentralization

Introduction

The process of urbanization in Tanzania has gained momentum after the early 1990s and altered the demographic, economic and geographical landscape of the country. The report by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2023) shows that more than 37 percent of the Tanzanian population currently lives in cities, which is expected to be over 50 percent as of 2040. This has caused so much strain on urban infrastructures, housing

and governance structures. Dar es Salaam, Arusha, and Mwanza, among others, are coming to be centers of industrialization, business, and migration although the Indian cities still experience governance issues that hinder inclusive and sustainable development (Magina, 2016).

The politics and urban planning in Tanzania show out a complicated terrain where development decisions are usually informed by political power structure as opposed to rational planning systems (Magina, 2016). Although the Tanzanian government has introduced a number of urban development policies such as the National Human Settlement Development Policy (2000) and the National Urban Development Policy (2012), the policies have not been translated into practical results. The technocratic interests are often not upheld by political interests, as a result of which urban sprawl, informal settlements, and uneven distribution of services occur (Steve Hatfield-Dodds, 2007).

According to the governance theory, urban planning in Tanzania is working under a hybrid system that involves centralized control system with partial decentralization. Even with provisions of the Local Government (District Authorities) Act of 1982 that offer devolved rules, the urban governments are largely dependent on the funding and provisions of the central government (Sanni et al., 2019). This reliance restricts the independence of the city councils to develop local solutions which are closer to the interests of the citizens. The politics of ruling parties tend to affect the planning process and determine how resources are allocated, zoning, and investments in infrastructure (Steve Hatfield-Dodds, 2007).

Inclusive development as a process that according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2021) grants equal access to opportunities and resources to all citizens is another issue faced by Tanzanian cities. Although Vision 2025 has been adopted, which is the middle-income and inclusive society, there are inequalities between the urban elites and the low-income communities. Favelas, where almost three out of five people live in Dar es Salaam (UN-Habitat, 2022), do not have the proper sanitation facilities, road networks, and land ownership rights. These circumstances reflect the failures in governance and the gaps between the policy implementation more than the deficiency of planning frameworks (Steve Hatfield-Dodds, 2007)

Land allocation and compensation disagreements are also another form of politics of urban planning. Urban land has been politicized in most of the cities in Tanzania where it is used to consolidate power or even as an incentive to loyalty (Sanni et al., 2019). As a result, there is lack of transparency and accountability as urban planning decisions are not prepared through real involvement of the people. This state of affairs continues to generate inequalities in space and socio-economic marginalization which is against the postulates of inclusive development.

The paper contends that though Tanzania has a good urban policy framework, the lack of implementation, which is driven by political interference, poor governance, and lack of institutional capacity, is the greatest challenge to inclusive urbanization. The paper takes a qualitative/analytical methodology through which it utilizes reviews of policy, government

reports, and peer-reviewed sources to assess the governance dynamics as it affects urban planning and inclusive development that occur in Tanzanian cities

Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Urban Planning and Governance in Tanzania

The form of urban planning in Tanzania has changed in the sense that during the colonial era, the main tools of urban planning used entailed segregation and control whereas in the post-independence period, the focus of urban planning was that of modernization and national development. (Sanni et al., 2019) argues that the colonial planning policies in Dar es Salaam, Tanga, and Arusha gave more attention to the European administrative and residential areas leaving the African populations out of the planned urban areas

This was carried on to the post-independence period where planning was used to restructure the economy and to administer the country and not to grow the cities in an inclusive manner (Akaateba, 2018)

After economic liberalization in the 1990s, Tanzania underwent a phenomenal growth overtime in urban areas, but without the institutional changes to control the physical and social effects of growth (Collins et al., 2021). The government implemented a number of urban development policies (National Human Settlement Development Policy, 2000 and National Urban Development Policy, 2012), but its implementation was hampered by the lack of capacity and political interference (Nuhu et al., 2023).

The body of literature on governance confirms that a proper urban planning must have clear institutions, participation, and political responsibility (Schmitt & Wiechmann, 2018) But in Tanzania, the governance is usually characterized by control and patronage networks which denies the local-level decision making. This consistency of planning without implementation as Kironde (2018) refers to it is the disconnect between the policy structures and the actualities of politics in urban management.

2.1.2 Urban Development Political Economy.

In Tanzania, the state, the activities of the non-governmental actors, and the international donors interact to determine the urban development political economy. The state continues to play an influential role in land distribution and urban planning, although, most of the time, development priorities are often influenced by political factors. (Pedersen, Rasmus Hundsbaek; Bofin, 2015) states that urban planning is a highly politicized process, and land and infrastructure project is frequently employed as political reward and control tool. This politicization compromises the professionalism of the planners and institutions lose accountability.

The multiparty democracy in Tanzania has increased political rivalry in the urban regions. As it is mentioned by Mwaikinda and Kinyashi (2020), in many cases, the city councils are led by opposition parties, and the central government is led by the ruling party. This has posed tensions that interfere with budget approvals, implementation of policies and

intergovernmental collaboration. As an example, in Dar es Salaam, with central and municipal councils fighting over land revenue and investing in infrastructure, important projects have been held up (*Case Study of Watumishi Housing Investment By*, 2025).

On the greater African scale, other researchers like Pieterse and Parnell (2014) point out that urban governance is not neutral; it is political as the access to power, land, and services are defined by the decisions made in urban planning. On the same note, Watson (2014) and Myers (2016) state that informal practices, weak institutions, and political patronage are crucial in the African urbanization process, and they can be seen in major cities in Tanzania.

2.1.3 Urban-Rural Inequality, Inclusive Development.

Inclusive development is a term that implies measures and practices that enable fair access of resources, services and opportunities to all urban residents (Onwujekwe et al., 2021). This has not been the case in Tanzania where the merits of urbanization have been unequally spread. According to the studies of UN-Habitat (2022) and World Bank (2020) (Cartwright & Cartwright, 2025), although urban economies contribute a significant share of national GDP, the majority of urban residents reside in informal settlements with poor infrastructure and poor tenure security and access to social services.

Political exclusion is caused and experienced by the spatial inequality between formal and informal settlements. According to Kombe (2019), informal areas are usually not involved in planning activities, but they constitute the larger population in the city. Access to roads and sanitation has been enhanced by government upgrading efforts, like the Community Infrastructure Upgrading Programmed (CIUP) in Dar es Salaam but it has not tackled the structural governance problems, including land tenure insecurity and local participation (Suri, 2018)

Inclusive urban development is associated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 11) in the global context, which are oriented at the inclusion, safety, resilience, and sustainability of cities. The fact that Tanzania has conformed to the SDGs and Vision 2025 shows that it is committed to inclusive growth, but the local implementation is still divided. Kilonzo and Msangi (2021) note that inclusive urban planning entails cooperation between government agencies, the developers and civil society organizations, but coordination is poor because of bureaucratic and political barriers.

2.1.4 Decentralization and Institutional Capacity.

In 1990s, the decentralization reforms were meant to increase the local government autonomy and autonomy of citizens. The Local Government Reform Programmed (LGRP) attempted to decentralize decision-making and enhance efficiency in the delivery of services (Kassim, 2018). But, as a matter of fact, metropolitan governments still widely rely on the central government grants, which constrain their ability to plan and implement development initiatives (Kaye-Essien, 2025). Mwaipopo and Kihanga (2019) conducted a study that revealed that even with the legal provisions upholding the notion of decentralization, there are fiscal limitations and overlapping mandate that hamper decentralization. As an illustration, the development of urban planning is largely controlled by the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and

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Human Settlement (MLHHS) that interferes with the local authorities. The outcome is a two-tier governance system that introduces confusion and stagnation in the policy implementation (Sanga, 2022)

Another theme that is recurring is capacity challenges. Urban planners, engineers, and financial specialists are not always available in many city councils. Ngware (2020) observes that local governments are prone to political manipulation due to their institutional weakness, as they would have to rely on the central approval of budgets and staffing. This reliance undermines accountability and prevents the inclusion of policies.

2.1.5 The Role of Civil Society and International Donors

The role of the civil society organization (CSOs) and international development partners in the urban governance of Tanzania is becoming increasingly important. The World Bank, UN-habitat and Cities Alliance initiatives have encouraged participatory planning, slum upgrading and sustainable infrastructure development efforts. In particular, the locally-based capacity and infrastructure delivery by the local government are boosted in cities like Arusha, Mwanza, and Dodoma as seen in the Tanzania Strategic Cities Project (TSCP) (Kabanda & Whata, 2024).

Donor driven projects may end up having sustainability problems after the foreign support ceases. Kironde (2018) and Kombe (2019) note that a great number of urban upgrading projects do not entrench participatory processes into the local governance systems. Equally, the civil society groups on land rights, and environmental justice face difficulties in funding and political space (Nuhu, 2019).

Collaborations between local governments and CSOs have also provided a possibility to enhance inclusivity. The experience of community-based planning by organizations like Haki Ardhi and the Centre of Community Initiatives (CCI) proves that the issue of community-based planning can increase accountability and fair development provided that these activities are properly supported by the policy frameworks (2023, 2021)Kilonzo & Msangi).

Although the past studies are insightful in understanding the city governance and planning in Tanzania, there are a number of gaps. To begin with, not many studies combine the political aspects of urban planning and policy implementation and inclusiveness. A majority of the studies separate planning and politics without considering the influences of partisan interests in development priorities. Second, the small empirical literature focuses on how decentralization, institutional performance, and inclusive urban outcomes are related to each other in various cities. Third, the international agencies have facilitated participatory models, but, insufficient evaluation of its relationship with local governance realities exists.

2.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Overview

The processes of urban development and inclusive planning are political processes predetermined by the institutional organization, relationships of powers, and governance. The workings of these dynamics in the cities of Tanzania cannot be complete without theoretical

foundation, which connects governance, participation and institutional behavior. The research uses three primary approaches including Urban Governance Theory, Institutional Theory, and the Participatory Planning Framework. Collectively these structures assist in describing the fact that governance structures, decision making processes and citizen engagement all contribute to the results of urban planning and the implementation of policies.

2.2.2 Urban Governance Theory

The Urban Governance Theory is a very broad approach under which the organization and regulating of the urban spaces are to be viewed. It reiterates the changes between government (centralized control) and governance (network-based management) to multiple actors: state, the private sector and civil society(Larsson, 2019) . Stoker (1998) defines governance as the creation of governing styles where the demarcations between and within the public and the private sector is blurred.

This theory is very critical in the Tanzanian situation since the urban planning is not based solely on decisions based on technical considerations but also on political and institutional power. The city-government of Dar es Salaam or Dodoma has overlapping authorities, including the central government ministries, local councils, and donor governments, which present different interests and degree of control(Sanni et al., 2019) . According to Lupala (2021), the nature of urban governance in Tanzania is characterized by rival centers of power, lack of coordination, and top-down governance that limits the input of locals.

The Urban Governance Theory assists us in understanding why the policies of the Tanzanian cities, which are so detailed, fail to work during the implementation process. The theory brings out the conflict between hierarchical control and network collaboration, which shows that centralized systems limit innovation and local responsiveness. A form of governance that involves non-state actors being sidelined like community organizations is likely to enhance inequality and marginalization (Pieterse & Parnell, 2014)

In this way, this study can evaluate inclusive urban development by using the Urban Governance Theory which reveals that the structures of governance can either promote or obstruct the inclusive development of urban areas in terms of decision-making, accountability, and participation through citizen engagement.

2.2.3 Institutional Theory

Another dimension of analysis in the form of an institutional theory is concerned with the influence of formal and informal rules in determining the outcomes of organizational behavior and policies. The interaction and distribution of resources and authority between actors is stipulated by institutions, which are considered to be the rules of the game(Libecap, 1997) . As explained by Scott (2014), institutions are constituted of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive factors that interplay to affect behavior and policy practices.

The institutional environment of urban planning is defined in Tanzania by intermeddling of mandates and lack of coherence between ministries and agencies and local authorities. As an illustration, the Development (MLHSD) of the Ministry of Lands, Housing,

and Human Settlement retains centralized authority over spatial planning when it should be prepared and implemented by local governments (Sakijege, 2025). The resulting duality contributes to what Kassim (2018) refers to as the institutional fragmentation condition, which compromises the coordination and the policy coherence.

The reason as to why reforms in governance, including decentralization, fail to deliver the desired results, is also explained by the Institutional Theory. Even though the Local Government Reform Program (LGRP) was aimed at improving the autonomy and accountability, bureaucratic inertia and political interference have inhibited the effective implementation (Mwaipopo & Kihanga, 2019). One more aspect that is going to corrupt the priorities of planning and undermine the legitimacy of the institutes is informal norms like clientelism, political favoritism, and rent-seeking (Nnkya, 2015).

Through the Institutional Theory, this paper examines the interactions between the formal policies and the informal political practices of Tanzania to determine the results of the urban planning. The theory offers an analytical context to explain the implementation gap between policy goals (including inclusivity) and the real practices (that are marked by the political and administrative constraints).

As previously discussed, participatory planning represents a modern strategy that complements the traditional one-dimensional planning framework.

2.2.4 Participatory Planning Framework

Participatory planning is a contemporary approach of supplementing the traditional one-dimensional planning model as discussed above.

The Participatory Planning Framework focuses on participative decision-making on urban development. It is based on the ideas of democracy and the rights-based solutions, which state that any meaningful citizen involvement, particularly of minorities, is the key to sustainable and fair city development (Wootton, 2018). The Ladder of citizen participation by Arnstein (1969) determines the various levels of participation that start with tokenism (consultation and no power) and citizen control.

In Tanzania, the National Urban Development Policy (2012) and the National Framework of participatory development (2015) have been promoting participatory planning. Nevertheless, the implementation is not consistent because of bureaucratic culture and political superiority over local decision-making (Yusuph & Guohua, 2017). His commentary on urban planning requires consultation, which means that community participation in urban planning becomes an aspect of urban planning instead of decision-making, which limits its potential to transform (Croese & Kombe, 2024).

Participatory Planning Theory is congruent with the wider objective of inclusive development that incorporates empowerment, transparency, and accountability. Both UN-Habitat (2022) and World Bank (2022) emphasize the fact that a participatory approach in such cities as Dar es Salaam has resulted in more equal service delivery and increased trust of citizens towards the government. However, such initiatives are contingent on political will, institutional capability and funding.

Through incorporation of the Participatory Planning Framework, this paper highlights that inclusive urban development cannot be attained by using only technical planning; it needs political inclusivity and community empowerment. The framework therefore gives the normative consideration to the assessment of the urban governance structures in Tanzania concerning inclusion and policy execution.

2.2.5 Conceptual Linkages

Urban Governance Theory, the Institutional Theory, and the Participatory Planning Framework, the paper theorizes a concept of inclusive urban development as the product of the effective governance, institutional integrity, and participatory involvement. The structure (as set out in Figure 1 below), explains that:

- i. The governance arrangements determine the way power and resources are allocated between state and non-state actors;
- ii. The institutional arrangements form the rules, norms, and incentives that dictate the behavior of the policy; and
- iii. Mechanisms of participation mediate between citizens and the state impacting on accountability and legitimacy.

When the institutions are weak and the cores of governance are centralized, the process of participation in Tanzania is rather symbolic, which leads to exclusion and inequality. Urban development on the other hand is more accommodative and sustainable when decentralized and participatory governance is in place.

Research Method

The design used in the study was the qualitative comparative case study design to study the impacts of political governance and institutional arrangements on urban planning and inclusive development in Tanzania. A qualitative method was suitable in capturing the experiences, perceptions and political forces of governing cities which are not quantifiable easily (Dawson, 2022).

The research design will be descriptive data analysis, as it will be used in exploring the hypotheses at the abstract stage.

The data were collected with the help of documentary reviews, the interviews with key informants and focus group discussions (FGDs) that took place in four largest Tanzanian cities: Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Arusha, and Mwanza.

The research materials comprised official policy reports and documents like the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, National Human Settlement Development Policy (2000), and National Urban Development Policy (2012) and urban master plans and reports of the development partners, including the World Bank and UN-Habitat (Settlements et al., n.d.).

Policymakers at the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Human Settlement Development (MLHSD), urban planners, and the representatives of civil society organizations that are engaged in city governance were interviewed semi-structured. The residents of formal and

informal settlements were interviewed in focus groups to gather the views of the community regarding inclusiveness and service delivery and access to land (Muhoja, 2025).

3.1 Sampling and Analysis

Participants were selected with the help of the purposive sampling technique according to their professional experience or positions in urban development in the community (Demir & Ercan, 2018).

NVivo software was used to analyze collected qualitative data in themes. Coding and pattern recognition were used to identify key themes that included: political interference, decentralization, institutional capacity, and participation (Orozco-ospino & Florez-yepes, 2025). The reliability and credibility of findings were provided by triangulating interviews, documents, and FGDs (Mtisi, 2022).

Informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality in respect to the guidelines of the Institute of Ethics of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Indonesia were considered as ethical points.

Results

4.1 Case Studies: Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Arusha, and Mwanza.

4.1.1 Dar es Salaam: Governmental Complexity and the Urbanization of the Informal Sector”

The most economically significant and the largest city of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, can be the most revealing example of the political relations that determine the urban planning and the inclusive development. There are over 7 million inhabitants in the city that bring nearly 17% of the national GDP (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] (Ostrovskii, 2024). However, it has escalated to very threatening level that is way beyond the planning. The poor and ineffective urban governance, institutional fragmentation, and political contestation in decades can be blamed as the reasons behind the urban sprawl and the emergence of informal settlements in the city (Affairs et al., 2021). Urban development in Dar es Salaam has been centrally organized and specifically so through the ministry of lands, housing and human settlement development. Although there is the Dar es Salaam Master Plan (2016-2036), the lack of resources, inefficient bureaucracy, and political influence on land allocation have impacted it (Kironde, 2018). The living population of over 70% is now located in informal settlements that are yet to be integrated into formal planning systems (UN-Habitat, 2022). Such efforts as the Community Infrastructure Upgrading Program (CIUP) have enhanced the infrastructure of the target regions, yet the program coverage remains insufficient and highly underfunded by donors (African, n.d.).

Land use planning has also been made hard to administer through political intervention. According to authors like Ngware (2020), the urban land is often employed politically as a way to reward allies and amass power. This leaves out fair land allocation and planning imbalances.

The multi-tiered control of the city by municipal councils, Dar es Salaam City Council, to central ministries has offered institutional overlaps and a poor level of coordination. This way, the infrastructure plans are likely to become delayed, duplicated and abandoned.

Unequal delivery of services has been devastating inclusive growth in Dar es Salaam. Whereas in the suburbs, like Mikocheni and Masaki, one can enjoy paved roads and a secure source of water, other suburbs like Kigamboni and Mbagala are subject to incessant deprivation. These inequalities show that governance is biased politically in favor of strong regions (Adwell & Sebahene, 2025). Dar es Salaam, therefore, shows how planning principles and politics are opposed to governance of the Tanzanian cities.

4.1.2 Dodoma: Planification y centralization politique - Urbanization.

The expansion of Dodoma as the capital city of Tanzania, which has been turned into the statutory capital city is an ideal example of the influence of the political decisions of the state on the final result of the urban development. Initially planned in 1973 as the national capital of the country under the decentralization policy of the then president Julius Nyerere, Dodoma kept staying in the underdeveloped state until 2016, when president John Magufuli decided to transfer the seat of power out of Dar es Salaam (Mosha, 2019). The political move revitalized the city with regard to investment and planning.

The Dodoma Master Plan (2019-2039) focuses on the modern infrastructure, administrative space, and residential development (George, 2025).

Planning of the city has however been highly centralized and there has been minimal involvement of the citizens. Although the plan includes the establishment of an inclusive and green capital, the governing decisions were made in a top-down manner and were driven by the political agenda of the government (Region, 2023). This rush of the population with public servants and private investors has led to the high demand of housing, and the rising cost of the land and slums in the outskirts of cities (Todd et al., 2019)

Institutional weaknesses have also been found in the relocation policy. The local governments cannot cope with land registration, developments of infrastructures, and collection of garbage. According to Mbuya (2022), local government authorities in Dodoma tend to give orders on behalf of the highest political leadership without exercising discretion and hence lack of uniformity in implementing planning. The system of paying residents who were displaced due to infrastructure projects is also criticized to be lack of transparency (Ng'wanakilala, 2018).

Nonetheless, there has been significant infrastructure development at Dodoma, in terms of new roads, schools and government services. The issue here is ensuring that such improvements are not limited to the government officials and the elite members to the poor citizens too. Without specific inclusion policies such as the participatory budgeting or community-based housing, the city will run the risk of repeating the Dar es Salaam spatial inequality patterns (P. Sciences, 2021).

4.1.3 Arusha: Urban Innovations and decentralization in local governments.

Arusha also describes the opposite case in which, local governance novelty and decentralization have led to a more inclusive urban management. Arusha being a tourism and international diplomacy hub has used its economic foundation to build greater institutions of local government. Some of the participatory strategies the Arusha City Council has employed in its urban planning have focused on the stakeholder involvement, community controlled solid waste management and community-based partnerships

The city development of Arusha has more autonomy of the local government as compared to Dodoma and Dar es Salaam. Transport reforms with social inclusion and environmental conservation policies were combined in the program like the Arusha Sustainable Urban Mobility Project (2017-2022), sponsored by the World Bank (World Bank, 2022). The participatory process of planning of the project engaged the local transport unions, business organizations and the citizens in discussing the route design and policy. This increased the ownership and responsibility of the project (Abukari & Benedict, 2020).

Arusha is still facing problems of high rate of population growth and unformal land market. Poor policies promoting inexpensive housing are still causing informal settlements to expand further such as Ngaramtoni and Terrat. Moreover, in some cases, the central government and the city council are involved in occasional disagreements concerning the priorities of the projects and revenue collection (Lameck & Hulst, 2020) . The experience of the city however demonstrates that decentralized decision making when coupled with institutional transparency can be used to facilitate more inclusive urban outcomes.

Interestingly, the civic involvement is also highlighted by the Arusha experience. Local non-governmental organizations like the Arusha Sustainable Cities Initiative (ASCI), that have played central roles in facilitating gender mainstreaming, environmentalism, and youth involvement in planning initiatives have existed (Lema, 2021). Such activities have led to enhancing local accountability and incremental gains on the quality-of-service delivery especially in the sanitation services and waste management.

4.1.4 Mwanza: Metropolitanization and Institutional Disintegration.

Mwanza, the second largest city and an important port of Lake Victoria is representative of the institutional issues of mid-level cities. Mwanza is home to a population of over 1.5 million people with the development they experience being fueled by trade, manufacturing and fishing. It has grown more physically than institutional capability and sustenance of policies (Lupala, 2021). Topography, hills, slums, and environmental degradation of the city are some of the challenges that the city experiences when planning.

Mwanza Urban Development Master Plan 2016-2036 aims to solve the land use problems, water, and transport infrastructure. However, adopting it has been linked to the issue of mandate clashes between the Mwanza City Council, the Regional Administrative Secretariat, and the organs of central government(Wankogere & Sanga, 2025) . This causes the policy inconsistency and inefficiency in services delivery at the institution according to Shayo (2020).

Socio-economic inequality is the factor that restricts inclusive development in Mwanza. The informal fishers and vendors are marginalized in the process of urban planning. The poor waste management has also resulted in massive pollution of Lake Victoria with the poor living populations along the lake resources being disproportionately affected (Mayige et al., n.d.). Despite various efforts by the city in world program such as the Lake Victoria Environmental Management Project (LVEMP) it has been facing disjointed developments owing to governance bottlenecks and inadequate local investments. Mwanza has suggested the possibility of innovation in slum upgrading through participatory budget and community-based development. The local NGOs and the Tupange Pamoja Initiative funded by the UN-Habitat have aided slum upgrading through micro-finance housing programs and community mapping (Nations et al., n.d.). Such examples demonstrate the way local leadership can bring concrete changes in the living environment when it is coordinated with the policy processes.

4.1.5 Comparative Insights

The politics in all the four cities are highly entrenched in the governance of Tanzania. Dar es Salaam demonstrates how inequality might be strengthened by political centralization, Dodoma demonstrates how state planning might have given up inclusivity, Arusha provides proof of how decentralization and participatory politics work, and Mwanza demonstrates the threat of institutional fragmentation. Taken together, these examples confirm that inclusive urban development is not just a technical or financial issue it is political.

Adequate urban policy implementation does not only require institutional ability, but political interests and desire to decentralize power, enhance accountability, and place the highest value on citizen involvement. Unless the political drivers of exclusion are addressed, the urban transition in Tanzania will probably strengthen the spatial inequality despite progressive policy architecture.

Discussion

5.1 Results and discussion Political and institutional Factors

The comparative analysis of the four cities indicated that all the political structures and systems of governance played a major role in determining the results of urban planning.

To begin with, the level of political interference was still strong, and the processes of urban planning were often influenced by the partisan considerations instead of professional judgment (Mordzeh-ekpampo, 2025). Local government that is under opposition like Dar es Salaam was most of the time blocked by the central government in the approval of budgets and implementation of projects.

Second, coordination was impaired because of institutional fragmentation. The overlapping between the mandates of the MLHSD and the President Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) led to the duplication of mandates, delays, as well as inconsistent enforcement of the policy (Kassim, 2018; Lupala, 2021).

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Third, a lack of fiscal independence of the local governments reduced their ability to plan and fund urban infrastructure. Central transfers were mostly inadequate and unreliable, and relied on as a primary source of revenue by most municipalities (Godfrey & Zhao, n.d.) .

Fourth, engagement of the citizens remained symbolic. With Tanzania adopting participatory forms, majority of urbanization projects had consultations and none of the decision-making power which was termed as tokenism by Arnstein (1969) in the ladder of citizen participation (No Title, 2023).

Lastly, corruption and informality of governance, which undermined the inclusiveness of the city, were also involved. Their compensation, land allocation and building permits were mostly linked to bribery and clientelism (Faye & Geh, n.d.)

These findings suggest that inclusive city development cannot be achieved only through designing policies. It requires political goodwill, institutional internalization as well as actual participation systems. As observed in such cities as Arusha, participatory governance made cities more inclusive and power centralization in Dodoma and Dar es Salaam made cities more spatially unequal.

5.2 Insufficient Co-ordination and Institutional Fragmentation.

The biggest barrier to inclusive urbanization in Tanzania is probably institutional fragmentation. The work of urban planning is decentralized in various ministries, agencies, and local governments that have contradictory mandates. As an illustration, even though the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlement Development (MLHSD) has a mandate of planning how land should be used and developing policy; the President Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) is in charge of service delivery and local government. The result of this separation is work duplication and coordination problems (Alemu & Kombe, 2025).

In the Dar es Salaam example, the various agencies including the Dar es Salaam City Council, municipal councils and national parastatals exist in semi-autonomous way and as a result; they have conflicting priorities in planning. Kironde (2018) points out that this kind of institutional confusion has a predisposition to halting the adoption of infrastructure projects and residential projects. Even more importantly, most city councils are not autonomous enough to make decisions regarding planning issues at their own discretion without the consent of the central government, which goes against the principles of decentralization (Ngware, 2020).

The urban data collection and land management are also concerned with this institutional deficiency. Mwaipopo and Kihanga (2019) note that the old maps and unreliable information hinder the process of making quality decisions. Without proper land-use data, it will be retrogressive planning, which will lead to urban sprawl and the growth of informal settlements.

The limited fiscal capacity and restrictive resources represent a constraint on the implementation of the interventions.

One of the greatest obstacles to inclusive planning is also financial dependence. The vast majority of Tanzanian urban centers are immensely dependent on transfers made by the central government as part of their annual budgets, and in most cases, receive less than they are allowed due to fiscal deficits or arrears (World Bank Group et al., 2024). This means that the local governments have minimal ability to fund the urban infrastructure, support the upkeep of the public facilities, or carry out upgrading projects in informal settlements.

According to the World Bank (2022), municipalities such as Dodoma and Mwanza that keep the majority of revenues below 10 percent of the total budgets. The property taxation which is one of the main own sources of income is not optimized because of the ineffective valuation frameworks and non-enforcement. This is a budgetary deficit that compels the municipalities to focus on the short-term running costs at the expense of the long-term goals in urban development (Kilonzo and Msangi, 2021).

Further, donor-funded projects though of quality are beyond the national planning systems. In Tanzania Strategic Cities Project (TSCP), an example is that despite its ability to enhance infrastructure in specific cities, there was very little improvement in enhancing fiscal autonomy or planning abilities locally (World Bank, 2022). According to Kombe (2019), external finance that is not institutionalized will result in short-term profits and not transformation.

5.3 Political Internalization and Centralized Authority.

The core of the problem of urban governance in Tanzania is political interference. Decentralization is officially endorsed, but, within the local government, the ruling party (Chama Cha Mapinduzi, CCM) continues to exercise a significant level of control in both the making of local government appointments and the local government decision-making. Kassim (2018), and Nnkya (2015) state that urban projects are even politicized at times, particularly in the run-up to elections, when land uses and infrastructure projects are utilized as political instruments instead of development goals.

The central government appointing the mayors and city directors instead of electing them locally destroys the accountability at the bottom. Ngware (2020) also adds that these leaders ensure that their agenda is aligned to national political agendas as opposed to local agendas. Concentration of powers affects the principle of participatory planning and restricts local innovation.

The conflicts between the centrally appointed government officials and the elected councilors in urban areas such as Dar es Salaam, where the opposition parties have taken control of municipal councils, have destroyed the service delivery and urban development programs (Ndunguru, 2025). Such conflicts demonstrate that the process of urban governance is not technical but a political phenomenon where the struggles to control, legitimacy, and resources decide the way things will unfold.

5.4 Informal Settlement and Rapid Urbanization.

In Tanzania, urban population grew as a result of rural-urban migration, natural growth, and economic factors to an approximate of 5 percent in 1967 to over 35 percent in 2024

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(Magina et al., 2024) . The same has not been accompanied by the planning and infrastructure investment in the urbanization. Thus, more than 70 percent of the urban population are in the informal settlement, especially, Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, and Arusha (Uisso et al., 2025) .

The major exclusions include land tenure, labor and housing informality. Poor access to water, sanitation, electricity, and secure tenure are enjoyed by the informal settlers. Moreover, the formal planning systems hardly consider the case of informal urbanization. According to Kironde (Lutta et al., 2021), the city policies in Tanzania have been based on the formal regulatory framework, which does not respond to the informal sector as a legitimate aspect of the urban economy.

Efforts at regularization of informal settlements like Plot Project of 20,000 in Dar es Salaam have been partially fruitless. Although the project brought more surveyed land on the market, most of the lots were beyond the reach of low-income earners and the informal settlements continued to grow (Kombe, 2019). These changes are an indication of a continuing inclination gap between planning goals and grounding in real practice

5.5 Lack of Effective Citizen Participation

Effective participation of citizens in the decision-making process is necessary in case there is to be inclusive development. However, the participation in Tanzanian cities is consultative or tokenistic and not transformative. The conceptual tool known as the ladder of citizen participation by Arnstein (1969) is rather classic: the majority of citizen participation initiatives in Tanzanian planning are at the consultation level, where the citizens are consulted but not actually included in the decisions made (Greiving, n.d.) .

Political representatives often lead community events in the ward or MTA level and not community leaders. Kilonzo and Msangi (2021) have established that lack of information, technical knowledge, and self-esteem mostly impedes local participation by citizens in Dodoma and Mwanza. Participatory forums are especially missing women and the youth.

Despite this fact, there are some examples of more fair practices that have been observed. The Community Infrastructure Upgrading Program (CIUP) and Participatory Slum Upgrading Program (PSUP) carried out by UN-Habitat proved that, in case communities are integrated into the planning process, the ownership and sustainability of projects become bigger (UN-Habitat, 2022). These models are to be multiplied with a high cost, institutional dedication, transparency, and money, which is yet to be provided.

5.6 Corruption and Land Governance Problems.

The participatory urban planning is very weakened by land management and permit corruption. According to Transparency International (2021), in Tanzania land corruption is one of the most reported malpractices in the society. Criminal acts are wrongful assignment of land, and falsification of land ownership papers, to bias in payment of compensation during resettlement.

According to Nnkya (2015), corruption flourishes because of bureaucratic complexity and poor supervision. Poor citizens are harassed and made to wait through lengthy procedures,

as the process is bypassed by the elites and developers through illegal payments. As a result, the urban land markets are exclusive and only politically-linked or rich individuals may access them (Kironde, 2018).

Corruption also prevents the private investment in affordable housing and infrastructure and hence inequality continues to exist. Open land information systems and e-governance tools can develop and limit the discretionary power and increase accountability in land transactions (Access, n.d.) .

5.7 Environmental and Climate Vulnerabilities.

Some of the limitations to inclusive city development are climate change and environmental degradation. Most of the Tanzanian cities, especially, the ones located along the lakes and coastal strips, share the same problems of flooding, erosions, and waste management. According to Kombe and Kreibich (Karlsson & Maniette, 2015), informal settlements in Dar es Salaam flood-prone regions seemed to be the most vulnerable ones yet they were not receiving adequate support in the formal planning bodies.

Indifference in planning contributes to inequalities. Examples of such poor people include people who are likely to move to risky areas due to high costs or locations of safer land (Myers, 2021). Moreover, climate adaptation interventions often do not focus on issues of social equity with consideration of physical infrastructure at the cost of livelihood resilience (World Bank, 2022).

An environmentally conscious climate governance incorporating social protection would enable the vulnerable groups to enjoy the adaptation. Coordination of environmental ministries, municipal governments and communities' organizations should be improved.

The paper acknowledges that the barriers to inclusive urban development in Tanzania are linked. The system of governance characterized by inclusion being only rhetorical and not real is caused by institutional fragmentation, political centralization and weak fiscal capacity. It is aggravated by urbanization, informality and corruption, which further enhances inequalities in land access and service provision.

To achieve inclusive urban development, the political economy of governance the allocation of power, resources, and accountability must be considered in addition to the technical aspects of planning. Healey (2006) and Pierre (2011) assert that partnership forms of governance, in which the public, private, and civil society sectors share accountability and decision-making, are the foundation of inclusive urbanism. Rewriting the laws governing decentralization, citizen participation, and land management is necessary to attain true inclusion in Tanzania.

Conclusion

The conclusion that was drawn in the paper was that centralization, bad institutions and absence of citizen participation still influence the politics of urban planning in Tanzania. Despite the progressive policy frameworks that have been adopted in the urban development

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such as the National Urban Development Policy (2012) and the Vision 2025, the developments have not been effectively undertaken due to political interference as well as institutional fragmentation.

The decentralization reforms have failed to provide total sovereignty and the local authorities lacked financial and administrative sovereignty over the central state. Consequently, there is housing, land tenure and infrastructure inequality in the urban areas.

Recommendations

- a) Improve Decentralization: Review the local governments structure to plan in a more responsive and accountable way (A. Sciences & Nuhu, 2021) .
- b) Enhance the Institutional Coordination: make the MLHSD more consistent with PO-RALG on the basis of the harmonization of mandates to minimize duplication and promote policy consistency (Lupala, 2021).
- c) Facilitate Participatory Governance: Strengthen participatory governance on the institutional level by instituting the participation of citizens in the budget process, land allocation and monitoring (Effectiveness et al., 2025).
- d) Tackle corruption: Digital land management and open data platforms should be introduced to make everything more transparent and discretionary (Pottier, 2025).
- e) Develop Institutional Capacity: Enhance the technical capacity of the local government by ensuring there is a continual training and professional development of the local government (Pottier, 2025) .
- f) Make it Green and Fair: Urban design should be environmentally stronger and gender-balanced, livelihood-secure in line with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) (Sádaba et al., 2024)

The shift in the form of governance that will be founded on the coordination of the participation between the policy-making and the genuine democracy will demand the transformation of the governance that will not be founded on the hierarchies of the control but on the incorporation of the urban development in Tanzania.

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